



Decision Making Process of Women Migrant Workers in West Java: The Intertwine of Religion, Culture, and Social Reality

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Received: 2020-03-27; Accepted: 2020-05-23; Published: 2020-05-29

Abstract: The decision to work abroad is a unique dynamic for women migrant workers because they have to leave their homes for a long time. The choice is not an easy thing to do. For women in West Java, who are predominantly Muslim, leaving their homes is still a theological and cultural debate as to whether women may work outside the home. Culturally, women are "*dulang tinande*," in which they are "not as a determinant" in family life. However, data show that high percentage of Sundanese women work abroad. This phenomenon is interested to be investigated. This research uses a feminist approach to uncover women's experiences and to recognise women's voices to be heard related to women migrant workers from West Java. Research shows that these workers have three motives for choosing to work abroad, namely: economic, human capital, and social reasons. Besides, they go through four decision-making processes to become migrant workers: self-stabilization, consultation with relatives, seeking information related to employment agencies (PJTKI), and consulting with Muslim clerics to ask for prayer and safety amulets. This study also found some interesting findings regarding women's decision to work abroad. First, resilient. They have strong mental endurance by taking immeasurable risks to work in another country. Second, a change in gender relations between women migrant workers and their husbands. Interestingly, the shift in gender relations is temporary

Keywords: cultural perspectives; decision making; religious doctrines; women migrant workers.

Abstrak: Keputusan untuk bekerja di luar negeri menjadi dinamika yang unik bagi para perempuan pekerja migran, karena meninggalkan rumah dalam waktu yang lama. Hal ini bukanlah sebuah keputusan yang mudah dilakukan. Bagi kaum perempuan di Jawa Barat yang mayoritas beragama Islam, pergi meninggalkan rumah secara doktriner masih menyisakan perdebatan teologis menyangkut boleh tidaknya perempuan bekerja di luar rumah. Secara budaya (Sunda) pun perempuan adalah "*dulang tinande*" yang berperan "bukan sebagai penentu" dalam kehidupan keluarga. Sementara data menunjukkan bahwa banyak perempuan di Jawa Barat menjadi pekerja migran, dan fenomena ini menjadi menarik untuk dikaji. Penelitian menggunakan metodologi feministik yang dianggap mampu mengungkap pengalaman perempuan lebih spesifik dan membuat suara perempuan lebih keluar. Penelitian memperlihatkan bahwa kaum perempuan yang mengambil keputusan untuk menjadi pekerja migran memiliki beberapa motif. Pertama, motif ekonomi. Kedua, motif Human Capital. Ketiga, motif peningkatan status sosial. Proses pengambilan keputusan untuk menjadi pekerja migran dilalui setelah melalui beberapa tahap, yaitu; pertama, menetapkan tekad di dalam diri. Kedua, berkonsultasi kepada suami dan keluarga besar. Ketiga, mencari informasi PT (PJTKI). Keempat, dalam banyak kasus berkonsultasi kepada Kiai (ulama) untuk meminta doa dan azimat keselamatan. Selain itu, temuan menarik lainnya adalah ditemukannya resilient dalam diri perempuan pekerja migran, yang menunjukkan adanya ketahanan mental yang kuat dengan siap mengambil resiko di negara tempat tujuan bekerja. Yang kedua adalah adanya perubahan relasi jender antara perempuan pekerja migran dengan suami yang ditinggalkan. Menariknya, perubahan relasi jender tersebut hanya bersifat sementara.

Kata Kunci: doktrin agama; pandangan budaya; pengambilan keputusan; perempuan pekerja migran.

1. Introduction

The interest of Indonesian looking for work abroad is very high. More than 2.7 million Indonesian are working overseas based on data in 2010 (Prihanto, 2013, 2014), and this number continues to grow each year. Data released by the Women and Gender Study Centre of the University of Indonesia showed that since 2007 almost 700 thousand Indonesian registered to work overseas. The state income from this sector showed a significant contribution from 2009 to 2010, about 6,615 million U.S dollars (Bank Indonesia & BNP2TKI, 2017). Many Indonesian workers, including those from West Java, chose Malaysia as their destination country for several reasons, such as geography, language, and accessibility (Susilo, 2016). Around 1.9 million Indonesian workers work in Malaysia, and almost 1 million workers work in Saudi Arabia. The total number of Indonesian migrant workers at the beginning of the fourth quarter of 2017 is more than 3.5 million (Indonesian Economic and Financial Statistics, 2020).

The high interest to work overseas is motivated by the lure of the household economic strengthening, which is below the poverty line (Mafruhah, Istiqomah, Mulyani, & Rahardjo, 2016). Muhammad Iqbal (2015) states that female migrant workers aim to improve the family's socioeconomic standard of living. However, even though they succeeded in improving their home economy, they encountered other significant problems, such as social problems (Primawati, 2017; Wafirotin, 2016). The transfer of childcare to husbands, parents, or families, for example, becomes a social problem as a consequence of their decision to work abroad (Rahmawati, 2009).

The economic improvement is indeed a core factor why many women decide to work as migrant workers. Irawati and Sri Wahyuni (2011) stated that families in their hometowns could use remittances for various needs that might not have been available before, such as housing improvements, education, health, and business capital.

Interestingly, women dominate migrant workers from West Java, or around 80% of the total migrant workers are women (Badan Pusat Statistik Jawa Barat, 2018). However, these female workers are vulnerable to unpleasant treatment during work (Sitepu, 2017). This data is a surprising reality considering the people of West Java (read: Sundanese) are people with a high level of religiosity. Synchronization between the teachings of Islam with local culture is very well established. The expression "Sunda teh Islam, Islam teh Islam" is a strong indication of how Islam blends with local traditions (Miharja, 2015; Praja, 2005; Qodim, 2019; Syukur & Qodim, 2016). For Sundanese people, the existence of Islam is like sugar with its taste (*jiga gula jeung peupeutna*). It shows that there is a harmonious interaction between the teachings of Islam and the local culture of the Sundanese people (Kahmad, 2006; Sumpena, 2012).

In Islamic teachings, earning a living is not the primary responsibility of women but men. Islamic society portrays men as having better physical strength than women so that men are responsible for earning a living. Consequently, it is not surprising that theologically, women must stay indoors instead of working as career women outside the home, let alone work as migrant workers (Q.S. 33:33). Similarly, Sundanese culture views women as "dulang tinande," which means women should follow men's decisions (Zulaikha, 2019). As a result, women find it difficult to decide to work abroad. They will encounter a myriad of barriers, from religion to culture. However, women ventured to take on the challenges of working as migrant workers with all its social dynamics.

Reni Nur Azizah has researched decision-making for women migrant workers in coastal areas in Brebes (Azizah, 2019). Research shows that the decision-making process involves the family to improve the family's economy. This study also mentions some of the positive and negative effects of these decisions on both personal and social. However, Azizah's research does not discuss in detail the role of religion and culture in the decision-making process to become migrant workers.

This research intends to explore the factors that encourage women migrant workers in West Java to decide to work leaving home amidst the confines of religious and cultural values that do not provide space for Sundanese women to do so. This study uses qualitative methods and interviews as a data collection. Interviews sessions involve several women migrant workers about their decision to become migrant workers abroad. Also, this study uses feminist approaches to provide opportunities for women to express their experiences and make their voices as knowledge (Reinharz, 1992).

2. Barrier Factors of Women Migrant Workers' Decision Making Process in West Java

As mentioned above, in Sundanese, earning a living is not a primary role of women. In Sundanese, women are expected to stay at home, taking care of the children and do housework. The men (husbands) are the ones who responsible for working outside as the head of the family. Thus, when women decide to work as an income earner, it seems contradicted to the dominant norm in society. Religious doctrines and cultural precepts do not encourage women to work in the public domain yet overseas. Thus, both factors are considered as barriers for women when they decide to work as migrant workers. They need to negotiate with religious doctrines and cultural understanding and internalisation within themselves for not transgressing the norms.

Religious Doctrines

As the religion of the majority of Indonesian people, Islam plays a vital role in building social order. Not only regulating how the relationship of a servant with his Lord, but Islam also regulates the relationship between servants. For example, in the context of family life, Islam regulates how relations between family members and their rights and obligations are.

Also, Islam regulates the role of family members. This religion expressly gives the responsibility of earning a living to men as the head of the family, while women are not the primary breadwinners. Women play a central role in the management of matters relating to the husband's property, such as the home and its belongings. Besides, women also play a role as "al-madrāsāt al-ūlā" or the first school for their children (Firdaus & Arifin, 2018; Nurhayati & Syahrizal, 2015). They care for and educate their children. Therefore, it is not surprising that women are not allowed to leave their homes except for emergency matters. In the Quran [33]: 33, Allah says:

وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَى وَأَقِمْنَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتِينَ الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِعْنَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا.

And stay quietly in your houses, and make not a dazzling display, like that of the former Times of Ignorant; and establish regular Prayer, and give regular Charity; and obey Allah and His Messenger. And Allah only wishes to remove all abomination from you, ye Members of the Family, and make you pure and spotless (Ali, 2000).

Theologically, this verse becomes the basis of men's legitimacy to forbid women from going out of the house without any urgent need. Wahbah al-Zuhaili (d. 2015 M) argues that the above verse implies that women should not leave their homes without an apparent reason. However, this prohibition does not apply if the aim is to go to a house of worship to perform the Prayer (Al-Zuhaili, 2006). Likewise, Imam al-Qurthuby (d. 671 H) states that although historically the verse was for the wives of the Messenger of Allah, it substantially included all women. Religious doctrines instruct Women to refrain from leaving the house without urgent needs. Besides, God warns women not to overdo in preening (*tabarruj*), as is the custom of Jahiliyyah Arab women. Al-Qurthuby views this prohibition as merely a form of respect for women (Al-Qurthuby, 2006, p. 141).

Muslim scholars agree that the ban applies in general, although historically, the verse regulated the behavior of the Prophet's wives. However, the ban is a problem for women in finding work outside their homes. If this verse is related to women's decision to work abroad, then some women will have a theological problem.

Cultural Precept

Gender equality has become a sensitive topic for the public. Women have a limited role or opportunity compared to men to be able to actively participate in various fields of social-community life, such as economics, social culture, education, politics, or other areas. Men still dominate in leadership, decision making, and other social rights, so it is not surprising that there is always an assumption in society that women are second class citizens below men (Jalil & Aminah, 2018).

Besides, culture also discusses the position of women, especially in the social-community structure. Sundanese culture is considered a religious society (read: Islamist). Sundanese women are often portrayed as beautiful, soft-spoken, gentle, motherly, or even intelligent and assertive. This depiction is seen in several mythologies about Sundanese women. In the story of Lutung Kasarung, Sunan Ambu is portrayed as a beautiful, kind, patient, and motherly person. Neither in the mythology of Nyi Pohaci. Nyi Pohaci is described as a beautiful, noble, soft-spoken, and polite person. His kindness and holiness produce blessings for humans on Earth. For Sundanese people who work as farmers, Nyi Pohaci has a respectable place. Nyi Pohaci is symbolized as the Goddess of Fertility. The adoration and respect of Sundanese people for Nyi Pohaci or Dewi Sri is implemented in various traditional ceremonial rituals related to agriculture such as Mapag Dewi Sri, Ngalaksa Ceremony or Tarawangsa Art (Heryana, 2012; Rohmana & Ernawati, 2014). The same thing is also illustrated in the story of Sangkuriang. Dayang Sumbi is portrayed as a beautiful, youthful, intelligent, and decisive figure (Hapsarani, 2017).

The description of women in Sundanese cultural mythologies above shows how the ideal view of Sundanese society about women in social values. For Sundanese people, women are "Indung" (mothers) who are not only to give birth and raise their children but also where their children return/go home. Besides, respect for women's position in the Sundanese social order is also often seen in expressions circulating in the community. Several Sundanese proverbs that show these indications are "ibu nu ngandung, bapa nu ngayuga; munjung lain ka gunung muja lain ka sagara, tapi munjung kudu ka indung muja kudu ka bapa," which means "mother is the one who got pregnant, while the father is the cause; praising is not to the mountain, worshiping is not to the sea, but praising is to the mother, and worshiping is to father." These expressions not only reflect the glorification of both parents but also uphold the legitimacy of men and women (Heryana, 2012).

Sundanese society shows a variety of responses regarding the egalitarian concepts between men and women in Sundanese culture. Some believe that Sundanese culture mainly adheres to a patriarchal system in which women are subordinate to men, while some consider Sundanese culture to be egalitarian. Historically, Sundanese society, as in the previous discussion, adhered to egalitarianism. However, the conquered of Mataram to Sundanese has influenced the social order of Sundanese people towards feudalism and social strata as in Javanese society (Ekadjati, 1995). It can be seen from the stereotypes in the Sundanese community, such as "awewe mah dulang tinande" (women follow men's decisions) (Abdullah, 2016). The existence of these stereotypes then becomes a barrier factor for women to be able to work or study outside their homes. Women are required to obtain prior permission from their husbands to be able to work freely outside the home.

3. Support Factors of Women Migrant Workers' Decision-Making Process in West Java

The high interest of Sundanese women to become migrant workers is a separate anomaly that has become a social reality today. In terms of religious and cultural doctrine, Sundanese women are not in a favorable position. They are not the authority in making decisions, and they are required to be a wife

who obeys her husband's commands and decisions. The study found that at least three main motivating factors were the reason for the high percentage of Sundanese women who became migrant workers.

Household Economic Strengthening

There is no doubt that the primary purpose of women migrant workers working abroad is economical. Interviews with several participants revealed that the most crucial motive in decision making for women migrant workers in West Java was to strengthen the household economy. Data from the West Java Central Statistics Agency (BPS) shows that in 2019 around 3.3 million poor people scattered in various cities/districts (Badan Pusat Statistik Jawa Barat, 2019). As a result, women migrant workers face a difficult economic situation. The husband's financial problems resulting in a weak household economy, causes women to choose to work abroad and hope to overcome their financial obstacles. As explained by R5 (Personal Communication, May 15, 2018) who has been a migrant worker since the age of 35, "My first decision to work [abroad] was because I had to have a private house, not a rented house; while my husband is unemployed." The existence of this social reality and the aim to improve their economic status make women have to make the right and fast decision to work abroad even though they are aware of all the risks they will face. To deal with these risks, they prepare themselves by enhancing personal skills, such as foreign language skills, caregiver skills, domestic work skills, and preparing themselves both physically and mentally.

Improvement of the Social Status

Changes in economic structure in Sundanese society from agriculture to industry have implications for changes in family income sources. Many West Javanese people change careers from farmers to others. The narrower the land, the higher the career replacement.

Unfortunately, these changes are not following an increase in human resources. People who change jobs from farmers to factory workers do not have enough skills. Consequently, those who have a low level of education and cannot compete with other workers choose to become migrant workers who do not need higher education and special skills. On the other hand, the patterns of life of the migrant workers have changed due to sufficient cultural contact. The ownership of electronic items such as gadgets, washing machines, televisions, and motorcycles has become new symbols of the success of one's life. Therefore, Sundanese women struggle to become migrant workers to achieve new social status in their respective regions. One of the respondents (R10, Personal Communication, May 30, 2018) said:

I want to change my destiny in the village so that I have my own house and furniture. ... my neighbors will respect me, not only as someone they always feel sorry. So my decision to become a migrant worker was to change my destiny in the village.

The motive to improve their social status in society is a consequence of the ownership of objects, which are considered as symbols of progress or modernity. They believe that purchase of such items can improve their social status from low-income families to higher-income families, even though the costs and risks that must be borne cannot be measured. Becker said that when someone chooses among several available alternative options, then the selected option is one that can provide maximum utility. The decision of women to work abroad is considered to produce maximum profits despite the expense of specific costs and risks (Becker, 1968).

Human Capital

The rapid growth of technology contributes to the sting of competition in the workforce. Business actors strive to recruit prospective candidates with excellent knowledge and skills. As a result, the job's opportunity is getting smaller due to, for example, a low level of education. Women realize the importance of education levels in the workforce. Therefore they decided to find a job that does not require a high level of education. Their best option is to work as a maid abroad. For those who have

children, they also strive to provide a decent and good education for their children. They hoped that their children would have no economic difficulties in the future as experienced by them. R3 (Personal Communication, May 30, 2018) described her experiences in this way:

I feel happier now that I can send my children to school until they graduate, and I can build a home from my remittances.

The above statement shows the human position as the capital. In social capital theory, a human is a form of resources like machinery and technology. Humans play an essential role in all economic activities such as production, consumption, or transactions. Human Capital emphasizes the importance of personal investments to increase productivity, including education, skills, health, experience, or individual habits. The awareness of women migrant workers to the significance of human capital encourages them to ensure their children get a decent and high level of education.

4. Decision-Making Process

It is not an easy thing for women to decide to become migrant workers. They have gone through a series of intricate and winding processes. They eventually had to consider all aspects carefully, from abandoned children and husbands and the social stigma towards them. Because of the urgent economic needs, they must make a quick decision. The following describes the experience of respondents in the decision-making process to become migrant workers.

The process of my decision to be a migrant worker was long enough. I told my husband that I wanted to be a migrant worker to have our own house; He then allowed me. We leave our children to our parents. I prepared everything myself until I finally went to Saudi Arabia. Before that, I searched for information about the risks of becoming migrant workers to people who have worked in the destination country so that I prepared to work well and have a good relationship with my employer (R5, Personal Communication, May 15, 2018).

I have been working as a migrant worker for two years in Malaysia. I decided to be a migrant worker because my husband was unemployed while we were staying at a rented house. I then discussed with my husband to become a migrant worker in America. However, I canceled this plan due to a problem at the airport. In the end, I chose Malaysia as a destination country. My husband did not know if I work in Malaysia because the most important thing is I have a job. Before departing to a destination country, I have prepared myself to follow the training to improve my skills through a series of exercises organized by a company. Also, I strengthen myself by asking for prayers from Islamic clerics so that I will have a good relationship with my employer and free from any problems at work (R6, Personal Communication, May 15, 2018).

Meanwhile, the following is the response of the husband who allowed his wife to work as a migrant worker:

When my wife decided to work as a migrant worker, I thought a lot of things and felt worried. Honestly, I prefer my wife to stay home. However, I finally allowed her [to work as a migrant worker]. I hope she can strengthen our household economy. ... Because of the urgent economic needs, our household economy was weak, we had a lot of debt for our children's education, our roof was leaking, and I was unemployed. Such conditions encourage me to allow my wife to work as a migrant worker. So, I gave her permission and strengthened my wife's decision (R7, Personal Communication, May 30, 2018).

Through the interviews with several respondents showed that women migrant workers passed at least four stages in deciding to work abroad. They have several driving factors, such as (family) economy, social status, and children's education. These factors became the consideration of women to make decisions as migrant workers. They will then discuss the decision to their husband and extended family. At this stage, the view of a husband and extended family is very influential. The positive encouragement of both will convince women to work abroad. The next step is to consult an agent or

PJTKI (Perusahaan Jasa Tenaga Kerja Indonesia/ Indonesian Labour Services Company) as an institution that will help them depart overseas. Some respondents stated that they also involve religious clerics in their decision-making. They usually ask for spiritual advice, prayers, and amulets so they can work abroad safely.

5. Analysis of Decision-Making Process for Women Migrant Workers in West Java

Resilient Value

Resilient is a person's ability to withstand when faced with challenging conditions. According to Southwick, resilience is the human ability to confront, overcome, or become strong when they face obstacles and difficulties (Southwick, Bonanno, Masten, Panter-Brick, & Yehuda, 2014). Resilience is not a miracle; not only is it found in some human beings and is not something that comes from an obscure source. Every human being can be resilient, and everyone can learn how to deal with obstacles in life. In the context of migrant workers, resilience is their ability to confront and overcome obstacles, barriers, and difficulties in their lives so that they can become stronger and more resilient.

There are some robust and resilient factors in women migrant workers. From several interview sessions with respondents, they showed a significant and daring attitude to take an unmeasured risk in the country of work. How do they become resilient, so they dare to take risks? Here are some descriptions from the respondents:

First, fight against fear before leaving for the destination country. Beginner female migrant workers have difficulty adapting to a new workplace away from home. To solve this problem, they must have strong determination and positive family support.

Secondly, migrant workers must have patience from various trials. When they work, they will face multiple challenges, especially from their employers, such as poor relationships with employers or long working hours. Patience becomes the strength to continue their job as migrant workers in the workplace. The respondents said that patience brought positive results. When they are patients from various workplace problems, they get a salary, and they can use it for children's education, ownership of vacant land, and private home establishments.

Third, the adaptation process. Most migrant workers work in diverse cultural backgrounds families, which differ from theirs. Ability to adapt in the workplace, such as maintaining a good relationship with the employer or obeying the employer's instructions correctly, will lead their relationship with the employer to be okay.

Fourth, migrant workers should have expectations. They expect to remain spirit, reliable, and resilient. Besides, they hope they can send their children to school, strengthen the household's economy, and have a decent private home. These expectations are the shining lamps in the hearts of these formidable women.

Gender Relations

Gender relations issues in some lower-class economic societies are not a problem. Society often considers gender relations as usual, as if it is a tradition in their communities. Therefore, its members receive the fact consciously. For them, poverty is more important than gender issues.

Women who decide to work abroad and get permission from men (read: husband) and people to work do not mean that the woman has control over resources, as found in the theories of gender equality in general. Instead, they are the only resources in the family that could change their household economic strength. Indeed, a change in gender roles happens in their families, such as husband raising children and do domestic works. However, this is temporary, not permanent. It means women must retake this domestic role when they return to their families. In some cultures, this internal role is women's full responsibility, even though men have been skilled in dealing with household affairs. The following is a statement from the R8 (Personal Communication, May 21, 2018) regarding gender relations in her household:

I was glad that my husband handles all the housework during my absence working abroad, from raising a child until taking care of our house; He took care of everything. Before I leave [abroad to work], it was my responsibility to care for the children, cook, and clean [our house]. However, upon my returned [from work abroad] and be home again, I do all housework ever still.

There is a sad fact about the social reality that women migrant workers have experienced where the gender activists and maybe other women could not accept it. Men, in reality, have exploited women economically to work abroad. Women are sending their salary every month to her husband for household needs. However, in some cases, husbands use wives' wages to marry other women on the grounds of loneliness being left by his wife. R4 (Personal Communication, May 15, 2018) states:

I felt sad and confused. When I returned home, my husband had another woman. The money I sent to him every month, he used to marry again. But I understood, I did not fulfill my [sexual] responsibilities as his wife. I am sure that my husband needs it (sexual urge).

Some women do not regard the husbands' choice to remarry as a betrayal of their marriage. They even blamed themselves and believed that the choice was a logical consequence of their decision to work abroad. The verbal agreement between women and men before leaving for work is just gone. Based on the interviews, their motivation to work overseas is to strengthen the household economy and the husband's inability to fulfill his responsibilities as a breadwinner. Likewise, women do not see the misuse of the women's remittance to men to remarry as their exploitation economically. Instead, they accept it as a risk to their decision to work abroad. According to the psychological theory, this situation is called *Hostage Syndrome* (Huriani, 2012, pp. 238–239; Poewandari, 2000, pp. 314–319).

Hostage Syndrome (also known as Stockholm Syndrome) is a condition in which cultural and social norms physically or psychologically ensnare women. This phenomenon could occur in families, such as women should care for children and their husbands and consider the harsh treatment of her husband as usual. In some societies, women have no right to determine their soulmates so that they have the syndrome to be dependent on the male value system. This concept initially emerged to understand the paradoxical of the hostages with their captors (husband, society, and culture) during captivity. Then, this syndrome is applied to other fields to understand the situation of women as hostages. As a hostage, women are complicated to leave their partners because the environment does not support them worthily. The social reality variables include the norm of marriage, the role of women in marriage, the messages that women receive from childhood, the lack of support from families and society, the lack of economic resources for independent living, and the lack of adequate legal protection.

With such social situations, women as hostages then switched to their resources. To be able to survive, they need to rationalize the negative consequences they faced as a natural consequence of their spouse. So, women adopt cultural norms that justify their spouse's negative behaviors (male). They must internalize the view that they are responsible for the success of their marriage. In these captive conditions, women will quickly internalize a lot of negative feelings, such as embarrassment, worry, sin, self-blame, and others. This condition ultimately causes the woman to be difficult to avoid the violence of her spouse (Graham, 1994).

6. Conclusions

The prohibition of women from working outside the home (read: abroad) both theologically and culturally did not reduce their interest in becoming migrant workers. Around 80% of West Java migrant workers are women with low levels of education, which becomes a strong reason for women to decide to work away from home.

Their main motive for becoming migrant workers is a factor of economic difficulties. The inability of men (read: husband) as the primary breadwinner to meet the needs of their families forces women to make quick decisions, even though they must violate ideal gender norms according to religion and culture. They expect a significant change in their family's economy.

This study found some interesting findings regarding the decision of women to work outside the home. *First*, there are resilient in themselves. They have strong mental endurance by taking immeasurable risks to work in another country. *Second*, there is a change in gender relations between women migrant workers and their abandoned husbands. Interestingly, the shift in gender relations is temporary. The willingness of men to care for children and homes as long as women work abroad is a necessity that is not related to gender relations issues. When women return to their families, their domestic role moves from men to them. In other words, women will get their roles back when they return to their families. Ironically, men often exploit this condition to commit “negative” actions, such as remarrying or having an affair with another woman. Some women do not consider this phenomenon as a betrayal of marriage, but rather a risk of deciding to work abroad or self-blame.

On the one hand, many Indonesian women migrant workers blame themselves for their husbands to exploit these conditions. It is due to the inequality in internalizing gender concepts in Indonesia, especially gender ideology during the New Order regime regarding ideal women, namely caring for their husbands and households. It results in women who are forcefully working abroad, not being able to fulfill their ideal duties. On the other hand, the husband’s negligence as a breadwinner is not in the spotlight. Therefore, this study recommends further studies to focus on the behavior of the husband left by his wife, who is a migrant worker. Particularly, husbands who are remarrying or having an affair with another woman.

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